El Dorado Foundation

The El Dorado Education Foundation actively supports standards and pedagogy through teacher grants and a teacher recognition program. While these ongoing projects have supported teachers directly in the classroom over the past six years, the Endowed Chair programs was established to systemically and systematically transform mathematics education. Implemented four years ago through a unique partnership with the El Dorado Public School District, the El Dorado Education Foundation created what is believed to be the only Endowed Chair program for a public school system in the state and perhaps in the country. Chairs of science and foreign language have followed the chair of mathematics.

These chairs have authority over all aspects of their respective disciplines, including: principals, teachers, curriculum, assessments, student achievement, technology, and professional development. By placing responsibility and accountability unto a single person (similar to a dean of a college), the district has systematically raised public understanding of the importance of mathematics, science, and foreign language education, as well as directly supporting the improvement of teacher quality in the classroom.

The chair of mathematics (Dr. Tim Martin) works closely with the Office of Research Measurement and Estimation at the University of Arkansas, to closely monitor and apply statistical techniques for raising student achievement, and to provide evidentiary input into the designing of high-quality professional development. By relying upon sound statistical procedures, Dr. Martin has guided the mathematical achievement level of all students to increasing levels in this highly diverse district, both economically and ethnically. Mathematics assessment results have incrementally increased each year of the chair of mathematics tenure. Parents, students, and educators, throughout the district are placing more emphasis on the importance of mathematics and its role in the future of the student, the school, and the community.

Initially, Dr. Tim Martin assessed the achievement levels of students and teacher knowledge. After this analysis, he actively began to utilize Teacher Quality Enhancement (TQE) grants to redesign professional development for mathematics. By working closely with two universities (Henderson State University, and University of Arkansas-Monticello), professional development for mathematics in El Dorado is now closely linked to best practices, graduate credit, and proven instructional techniques. Since TQE grant funds are no longer available, the chair program will begin utilizing Title II-A funds to continue professional development via collaborations with the two universities.

The next phase of the chair of mathematics' strategic plan calls for the development of curriculum replacement units to address historical weaknesses, an elementary mathematics and science focus school, and instructional interventions based upon technological and curriculum resources. Replacement units for the curriculum will be implemented in grades 5^{th} through 8^{th} this year with elementary grades following next year. The mathematics and science focus school will be a part of the district's elementary school reorganization into five focus elementary schools, three of which will be math and science-related. Next year, interventions for student learning in mathematics will become a part of each school day, in an effort to help all students achieve prior to being left behind by grade level.

Mathematics education has been transformed by having a single individual in a position of responsibility guiding the instruction of mathematics, as well as by the design of high-quality professional development based upon state and national assessments. This model for accountability and collaboration can be duplicated with similar results. While instructional practices continue to fluctuate, the need for sound guidance utilizing proven pedagogical techniques has not changed. When one individual bears the responsibility for education, all students can be held to high standards.